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IN SARAMEDE

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A COMEDY-PASTORAL IN
THREE ACTS

By

MARIANNE STAYTON

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“IN SARAMEDE ”

A Comedy-Pastoral in Three Acts,

BY

MARIANNE STAYTON.

Produced on June 8, 1911, at Rowledge, Farnham,
with the following cast :—

PRINCE ROLFE OF SARAMEDE	Mr. Henry Le Grand
SIR MERLYN OF THE GLYDD	Mr. Olaf Baker
PRINCESS ROSAMUND	Miss Marianne Stayton
PRINCESS ISRA	Miss Ierne Fitzgerald
THE LADY MAUD	Miss Elsie Pennington
THE LADY PERLA	Miss Marjorie Hamel
THE LADY HILDA	Miss Dorothy Stevens
THE LADY FREDALINE	Miss Lois Kempson
THE LADY ZINDA	Miss Olive Pennington
THE LADY ERMYNTRUDE.	Miss Rose Lane
MARTHA OF THE MEREDINES	Mrs. Willie Bashall
(The Prince's Old Nurse)	

*Time and Place ; A Summer Day upon the Isle of
Kings.*

*Act I., Morning ; Act II., Afternoon ; Act III.,
Evening.*

Produced under the direction of Mr. FRANK STAYTON.

ISRA. A little, fair, fluffy girl, taking herself *very* seriously.

MAUD. Fat and little and giggly. A great sense of *fun*.

PERLA. The only one of the crew with a real sense of humour, which she consistently hides under a languid, affected, sugary manner. Rather tall, she affects artistic attitudes and general floppiness of bearing.

HILDA. Tall, angular, brusque. Sort of girl who sticks her chin and elbows out. Very downright.

FREDALINE. Large and gloomy, with a habit of staring vaguely at things and people.

ZINDA. Snub-nosed and conceited. Persistent.

ERMYNTRUDE. Slight and negative, though one hopes not quite so stupid as she seems.

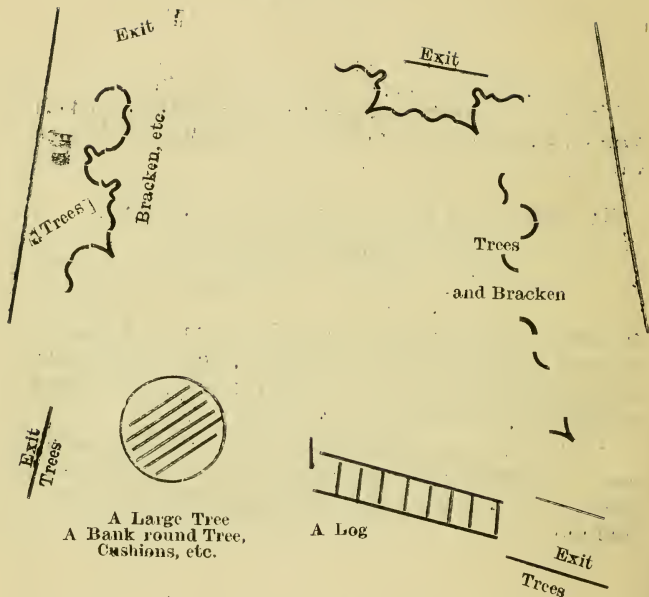
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All the costumes and wigs used in " In Saramede " may be hired or purchased reasonably from Messrs. Chas. H. Fox, Ltd., 27, Wellington Street, Strand, London.

SCENE PLOT



A Forest Glade, exits wherever you please.

ACT I

The Girls come through the forest.

ROSAMUND enters L. 2 E., runs to L. of tree, panting-stops, listens, then quickly behind it to R. of it, hiding. HILDA, PERLA, ERMYNTRUDE run on L.U.E., looking, stop up L., then quickly across to up R. Then ZINDA, MAUD, FREDALINE from L.U.E. ; they remain up L. ROSAMUND then darts across to L. below log. Girls hear her, all come down slightly. HILDA and PERLA come down R. of tree. ERMYNTRUDE L. of it. ZINDA to R. of log above it. MAUD and FREDALINE to L. of it above it. ROSAMUND dodges.

HILDA (breathless). Pray stop, dear Rosamund !

PERLA. Oh, Rosamund,

Thou runnest like a hunted hare !

ROSAMUND (laughing). Nay, then,
We'll call a halt awhile within this grove !

(ROSAMUND coming forward to C. ; girls a little down.)

Why, see ! It is *another's* resting-place !

Perchance the old nurse comes to doze and nod . . .

Well, well, we'll borrow it with grateful thanks !
(Sits under tree.)

(HILDA and PERLA sit R. of tree ; ERMYNTRUDE L. of tree ; ZINDA R. of log facing out ; FREDALINE L. of log, back to audience ; MAUD kneels one knee on log, hand on ZINDA'S shoulder.)

Are we all here? (*Enter ISRA L.U.E., limping; comes to L. of ROSAMUND.*) Where's Isra?

ISRA (*rubbing her ankle*). Some of me's
On yonder thorn! Ooh! I've a scratch so long!

FREDALINE (*ever gloomy*). Some thorns are poisonous.

ERMYNTRUDE.

Oh, Isra dear!

ZINDA. Wilt thou not suck the place?

ISRA. No, I will *not*.

(*ISRA sits L. of ROSAMUND.*)

ZINDA. My cousin, Hillibert of Ortamonde——

(*Girls turn to her, pretending breathless interest.*)

MAUD
and
HILDA. } Yes, yes!

PERLA
and
ERMYNTRUDE. } Go on!

All. Thy cousin Hillibert? . . .

ISRA (*reprovingly*). Of Ortamonde!

All. Of Ortamonde, of *course*! . . .

ZINDA. When once a thorn into his *finger* drave——

ISRA. Into his royal finger!

MAUD. Traitor thorn!

All. How terrible!

PERLA. Oh, *what* said Hillibert?

ZINDA. He said——

Girls. Ye-es? . . .

ZINDA. That to *suck* the place was best!

(*Girls laugh.*)

ROSAMUND. Nay, tease her not! Her cousin
Hillibert

Is doubtless a wise man!

ISRA (*looking at ZINDA*). It *may* be so.

I think he is first-cousin to a *fool*!

(ZINDA *pouts.*)

ROSAMUND. I wonder where the Prince is ! Oh,
 how strange
 To think we are upon the sacred Isle
 That knows his daily step !

PERLA. Oh, Rosamund,
 But if he should be angry at our deed !
 What would he do ?

FREDALINE (*gloomily*). Behead us all, belike.

MAUD. Oh, me ! I'd hate myself without a
 head !

ISRA. Why ? 'Twould but be the giving up for
 good
 What thou hast lost so often !

MAUD. Better head
 Than heart, dear Isra !

ISRA. Poof ! I think not so !

MAUD. Heart goes first. Head goes after to bring
 back !

ISRA. Then, sooth, *thine* must have journeyed far
 and fast !

MAUD. Indeed, it knows the way home safe
 enough !

ISRA. What art thou dreaming, dearest Rosa-
 mund ?

ROSAMUND. How will he look, our Prince we've
 loved so long

But never have beheld ! Oh ! he will move
 In noble guise ! Grave eyes I think he'll have,
 Eyes full of dreams . . . but grave. Upon his brow
 The stamp of thought . . . and dreams. His mouth
 so cut

To show the splendid will behind the dreams. . . .
 Oh, I do think he'll prove a perfect knight,
 Chivalrous, strong, and tender ! One to lift
 The Nation in his hands, as gift to God.

HILDA (*always downright*). If he's indeed so very,
 very fine,

Why has he lingered here in idleness
These many years ?

ROSAMUND. He has been held in dreams . . .
But dreams, I'll swear, of noble things and true !
Awake him, he'll come forth to *live* the dreams . . .
That is our mission here . . . to waken him.
'Tis sure a holy Quest !

MAUD. Oh, Rosamund !
I thought our journey was but took in fun,
A summer jest !

ROSAMUND. Within jest earnest lies,
The seed within the gaily dancing flow'r.

MAUD. Oh, dear !

PERLA. How beautiful ! I had not thought
That I was on a Quest, or I'd have worn
A better gown than this.

(Rises, looking at her gown ; then sits again.)

ERMYNTRUDE. 'Tis strange to think
None hath beheld our Prince !

FREDALINE (*sinister*). 'Tis *very* strange.
Perchance there's reason for't.

MAUD. Oh, Fredaline !

FREDALINE. One never knows.

ROSAMUND. Since he was three years old

(General interest.)

He has dwelt here in Nature's solitudes,
Such was his father's wish and will for him.
Since three ! . . . That's five and twenty years ago !

(Girls all count up on their fingers.)

FREDALINE. A wasted life !

ROSAMUND. No, no ! A vigil blest !

MAUD (*to* FREDALINE). He's missed the fun at
Court !

ROSAMUND. Ay, that he has !
Missed all the gossip and the ribaldry !
Missed all the gaming, drinking, and high words !

The incense of self-seeking flattery !
 And all the amorous fools who would have trailed
 Their lures across his path . . . across his soul !
 Instead, he's had the converse of the birds !
 Joined in the splendid revelry of Spring !
 Glowed to the chant of the eternal winds !
 Breathed incense of the solemn sun-hot woods !
 And, for caress . . . his virgin cheek has known
 The sweep of dew-wet roses in the dawn . . .

HILDA. Well, if *that* satisfies him as a kiss
 He's welcome to't ! 'Tis far from *my* idea !

PERLA. Or mine !

MAUD (*giggling*). Or mine !

ISRA. To tell you truth,
 Or mine !

ZINDA (*coughs impressively*). Er-h'm ! . . . (*All
 turn to her.*) My cousin Hillibert—

All. What ?

PERLA. HILLIBERT ?

GIRLS. THY COUSIN HILLIBERT ?

ZINDA (*petulantly*). Nay, I'll not tell you, then !

(*Rises, sits with her back to audience.*)

(*MARTHA enters R.U.E., crosses back, comes behind tree
 to C., slowly. She is a buxom old dame with a
 temper and a sense of humour.*)

FREDALINE (*rising*). Soft ! Some one comes !

(*ROSAMUND crosses to R. end of log. MAUD and ZINDA
 quickly to L. of log below it. ISRA to behind
 ROSAMUND. ERMYNTRUDE to below tree to
 PERLA and HILDA. Tip-toes all.*)

A woman with a fierce and warlike frown !
 We are undone !

ISRA. Speak to her, Rosamund !
 Thou'rt leader ! She is here !
 Save us !

ROSAMUND.

Good-day !

MARTHA. Powers of sin, what are ye doing here!
How came ye? Whence? What! What! Why,
do ye know

Ye are at trespass of the Isle of Kings?
What's that ye say? Who *are* ye, wench?

ROSAMUND. I am
The Princess Rosamund, of Ildamede.

MARTHA. *Eh?*

ROSAMUND. This my sister, Princess Isra . . .

(ISRA *drops a deep, mocking curtsey.*)

These,
My friends, the daughters of our dukes and lords.

(*All curtsey, same bus.*)

(HILDA *goes to L. of her group.*)

ISRA. Thou see'st we're quite respectable, good
soul!

(MARTHA *glares at her.*)

ROSAMUND. If our intrusion shocks thee, under-
stand

That we are maids of Saramede, and come,
Out of our deep and ardent loyalty,
To lay our homage at our Prince's feet.

MARTHA. Well, I'll be——

ISRA. Ssh! (MARTHA *glares at her.*)

ROSAMUND. Art thou his ancient nurse,
Of whom report hath spoken o'er and o'er
As patient, kind, and true, if somewhat stern?

MARTHA (*pleased*). Report hath named me *so*?

ROSAMUND. Indeed it hath!
We all know Martha of the Meredines!

GIRLS (*under their breaths, curtseying deeply*).

"Martha of the Meredines" . . .

MARTHA. Tut! Say ye so! Well, well! Now,
fancy that!

Report *can* speak the truth, then! Nay, I'll not
Deny my virtues. . . . It would be to shame
The One that placed them in me! Dear, dear, dear!

(*Suddenly remembering.*)

How *dared* ye come to this embargoed spot?

ISRA. We did so *long* to see *thee*!

(MARTHA glares at her.)

(*To Girls.*) Hide me, friends!

ROSAMUND. Indeed, it was an impulse of our
hearts!

We think he has dwelt long enough in dreams.
We think, perchance, he should be waked at last.
We think he should take hold of things, and rule.
We think . . . we think . . .

HILDA (*bluntly*). We think he should be—wed.

(HILDA turns her back abruptly on MARTHA.)

GIRLS. Oh, Hilda!

HILDA (*over her shoulder*). Oh, you know I speak
the truth!

MARTHA. Well, I'll be——

ISRA.

Ssh! (MARTHA glares.)

MARTHA.

So *that* is what ye think!

I'll warrant me each has the *bride* in mind!

If ever I have heard the like, may I

Be wed at ninety to a toothless babe!

(*Chuckles.*) A lot of daring hussies! I'm not sure

I do not love ye for it! But the Prince

Would see ye fruiting each a separate tree

Like *this* . . . (*imitates handing; girls pretend horror*)
before he'd wed with aught of ye!

FREDALINE (*with deep gloom*). Said I not so?

We'll all be dead ere noon!

ROSAMUND. Good soul, thou art mistaken! They
but jest.

There is no thought of marriage in our hearts.

Is it not so, friends?

GIRLS (*doubtfully*). Ye-es

MARTHA (*winking to herself*). I'll warrant me !

ROSAMUND. He is our Quest, our Grail ! Adventured thus

We are in sort Knights Errant. . . .

ISRA.

Hungry ones !

MARTHA. Well, well, ye have my breath quite
took away !

(MARTHA goes up to R. of log, sits. ROSAMUND goes
to girls at log also. FREDALINE and MAUD coming
round behind log to R. of it.)

How did ye come ?

ROSAMUND. By boat. They left us here,
And will return this evening.

(ROSAMUND goes up C. to L. of tree.)

MARTHA.

Heaven's Grace !

Where shall I hide ye all till then !

ZINDA.

Thou think'st

The Prince will not invite us ?

MARTHA.

Bless you, no !

He's never met a woman in his life

Save me, since he had eyes to see at all !

Think of the fright ye'd give him !

MAUD (*giggling*). Thanks, good dame !

ERMYNTRUDE. Oh, I'm so hungry !

ZINDA. Oh, and I !

GIRLS.

And I !

MARTHA. Well, well, Knights Errant must be
fed ! (MARTHA rises ; comes C.) See ye,

There is a grove but yonder (MARTHA points off L. & E.)
a short way,

Hid there, I'll serve ye. I've a cottage, too,
Where ye may bide awhile.

(Girls rush round her, all but ROSAMUND, who falls to
dreaming under tree. FREDALINE, HILDA, PERLA,

ERMYNTRUDE to R. of MARTHA. MAUD and ZINDA to L. of her. ISRA above MAUD.)

GIRLS. Oh, where? Oh, where?

MAUD. Hast thou a mirror?

PERLA. And a comb?

FREDALINE. Some salve

For my sun-blistered skin, or else am I

Bound to be stricken by some fever'd ill!

ISRA. Some flour, good Martha, as thou lov'st me!

MARTHA (*puzzled.*) *Flour?*

ISRA. I'm sure my nose shines like the sun at noon!

GIRLS. Mine, too!

MARTHA. Come then, I'll do my best for ye!

(*Girls pull her off L. I E., laughing and talking. ISRA turns back to ROSAMUND.*)

(*Music*)

ISRA. Dear Rosamund, awake thee!

ROSAMUND (*rousing herself*). Yes . . . I come!

(*She and ISRA follow the others off L. I E.*)

(ROLFE and MERLYN enter R.U.E., crossing slowly behind tree to down C. PRINCE ROLFE is a tall, handsome man of about 28, with a strong, grave, dreamy face, which yet shows a whimsical humour. SIR MERLYN is 30. Fat, vain, heavily mustachioed, brainless, but faithful. He is elaborately dressed.)

ROLFE. What's in the air to-day? It hath a scent

Sweeter than I have known . . . or else I dream!

Opens some rarer blossom to the light,

Or what enchantment's here? I seem to feel

A touch upon my senses. . . . (*Dreamily.*)

SIR MERLYN (*sitting L. of tree and scratching about with his dagger.*) Ah, Sir Rolfe,

'Tis here the very finest truffles grow!

ROLFE. Truffles, forsooth! Have at thee for a pig!

SIR MERLYN (*stops scratching*). But, sir, you like them well!

ROLFE. Ay, in their place,
Or rather, out of it! Now, faithful friend,
Withdraw a bow-shot from me—a long shot,

(SIR MERLYN *rises*.)

As far as voice may reach! I'd be alone
To take the benison of morning breeze,
And absolution of the mounting sun. . . .
What wealth of silver in the beeches' shade!

SIR MERLYN. *Silver, sir? Where? I see none!*

ROLFE. 'Tis the brake,
The fairies' forest, where they hide in June. . . .

SIR MERLYN (*seriously, rubbing knee*). One nipped
me on the knee last night, methinks,
I had a very mountain of a bump! . . .

ROLFE. Thou did'st not dare to roam the brake
at eve!

They hold their revels then, at rise of moon,
In dusky ball-rooms of the scented fern . . .
And if thou, thoughtless faring, blundered through,
'Tis very certain some indignant sprite
Plunged spear of grass in thy intruding knee!

SIR MERLYN (*going hurriedly and dodging the bracken*).

I'll not go there again! (SIR MERLYN *exits*
R. I E.)

ROLFE (*looking after MERLYN to R.*). A faithful fool,
A simple fool, whom I do jest withal
In an unknightly way! (*Goes up below tree, sitting.*)
Cry shame on me. . . .

(*Looks up into sky to L.*)

Ha, there! Sir Hawk! Old Hunter! Where's thy
prey? . . .
Hide, gentle dove, for death hangs in mid-air!

He's gone. . . . How strange the Law that's in it
 all,
 One Law, and yet results so all unlike !
 It bids the rose perfume the summer wind,
 That summer nights be founts of ecstasy,
 That summer streams should cool, and heal, and
 bless . . .
 That hawks should stoop, and doves should suffer
 wrong !
 Perchance the wind's the hawk unto the rose,
 Her scent her lie. . . . Nay, God's behind it all ! . . .

(MARTHA *hurries in* L. 2 E., *behind log to c.*)

MARTHA. Sir Prince ! Sir Rolfe ! Sir Nursling !
 Art thou there ?

ROLFE (*dreamily*). Ay ! . . .

MARTHA. Here's a pretty piece of work to do !
 What think you's happened ?

ROLFE. Nay, I know not.

MARTHA. Why,
 We are invaded, that's the very truth !

ROLFE (*springing to his feet, hand on knife*). *In-
 vaded ?*

MARTHA. Ay, you'll need your *arms*, Sir Knight !
 (*Chuckles*). *Both*, may be ! 'Tis a very deadly foe !

ROLFE (*jaces MARTHA*). What mean you ? Tell
 me, woman !

MARTHA. There ! There ! There !

(MARTHA *puts her hand on ROLFE'S arm*.)

It is no horde of savage, sworded men !
 Thou can'st not hurl thee swift upon them so !
 Nay, nay, my son ! Arm thee *another* way !
 Blindfold thine eyes ! Stop up thine ears with wool !
 Bind thine arms tight behind thee ! Bind thy
 thoughts !
 And then go face thy mortal enemy !

ROLFE. Thou art not drunken, nurse, at thy full age?

MARTHA. I drunken? *I?* Nay, nay, fear not for me!

See that *thou* art not drunken with their smiles;
Their soft, slow voices; and their ling'ring eyes;
The perfume of their hair; their swaying shapes!

ROLFE (*impatiently*). Whose eyes? Whose smiles?
Whose voices?

MARTHA (*complete change of tone, as to a child*).

Save in books,
And flat and shapeless there, thou hast not seen
Aught feminine, in five-and-twenty years,
Save me, thine old and somewhat out-worn nurse!
Well, well! 'Tis deluge where I'd have a show'r!
Still, if one's drowned, what matters brook or sea!

ROLFE (*sternly*). Why, how you babble on!
Now, what's to do?

MARTHA (*finger to her lips, then tip-toes to L., looking off L. 1 E. and L. 2. E., then tip-toes back to ROLFE, stage whisper*). Sir . . . there are women here!

ROLFE. What say'st thou?

MARTHA. Sir,

We are invaded by a horde of girls!

ROLFE. *What!* Here! (ROLFE *a step down R.C., then turns to MARTHA.*) Upon the sacred Isle of Kings!

How came they? Whence? What is their purpose?

MARTHA (*chuckling*). Why,

It is to find their honoured Prince—a wife!

ROLFE (*aghast*). A *what*?

MARTHA. A wife, sir.

ROLFE. How! A *wife*. For whom?

MARTHA. For thee!

ROLFE. For *me*? . . . Am *I* mad, or art *thou*?
How dare they set their feet upon this land?

What are these women like? (*Crosses MARTHA to L.C. below log.*) Women . . . how strange!
I have not seen a woman yet . . .

Save thee!

Why, none has dared what these have! Who are they?

MARTHA. Princesses, and the like, of Saramede. One calleth thee her Knight, her Quest, her Grail. She's harmless, belike mad. She lives in dreams. But there's another saucy wench, with eyes As naughty as her tongue! And all the rest Have one idea held fast . . . You should be wed. I think they'll see you do't!

ROLFE. Hawk from the sky!

Hide, dove, or perish! Quick! (*Comes to MARTHA, then across to R.C., calling; then turns again to MARTHA.*) Where's Merlyn gone?

(*Calling.*) Merlyn! Oh, Merlyn! Find him! Send him here!

And you, nurse, not a word, what'er you see!
Go, find Sir Merlyn quickly! Go, good soul!

(*MARTHA crosses front of ROLFE and exits R. I E.*)

When sudden danger threatens, be sudden, too! . . .

(*SIR MERLYN enters R. I E., limping wearily. ROLFE meets him above him, takes him by his L. arm to C. almost L.C.*)

Ah! there thou art! Oh, friend, I've need of thee!
Come quickly, quickly! Listen! There's a foe
Here in our midst!

SIR MERLYN (*stops short*). A foe?

ROLFE. A deadly foe!

Woman! Determined, fair, implacable!

SIR MERLYN. Woman, Sir Prince?

ROLFE. Ay, woman, Merlyn! Girls!

SIR MERLYN. GIRLS!! (*Breaks slowly into a broad grin and begins to twirl his moustache.*)

ROLFE (*a step down to L., then turns to MERLYN*).
I hear voices! Listen! While they're here
I'm you, you're me! You tak me?

(SIR MERLYN *looks puzzled.*) It is *you*
Who are the Prince! I'm but your humble man. . .
You, *you* are Rolfe of Saramede! You hear?

SIR MERLYN. *I you?* No, no! Oh, I am all dis-
traught!

Girls *here?* My trunks! My hose! I am not
waxed! (*Feeling moustache.*)

ROLFE. Sir Knight, you fail me, you on whom I
rest?

You do refuse the service that I ask?
I'll look elsewhere, then!

(ROLFE *crosses* SIR MERLYN *to R.*)

SIR MERLYN (*kneels to ROLFE*). Oh, Sir Prince,
thou know'st
My very life is thine, but . . .

(ISRA *heard.*)

ROLFE. Here comes one! . . .
Is a maid's voice like that? 'Tis passing sweet!
Stand up, man. (SIR MERLYN *rises, and ISRA enters*
L. I E., she stops L. end of log.) Throw thy chest!
Thou art the Prince!

(As ISRA *draws near.*)

Oh, very good, Your Highness! I will see
Your will is done! (*Aside to MERLYN.*) How's that?
(*Aloud.*) I thank you, sir!

(SIR MERLYN *swaggering across to R.*)

ISRA (*coming to R. end of log*). My good young man,
that . . . *that* is not the Prince?

ROLFE (*a step to ISRA*). Madam, where are your
eyes? Is not his rank
Stamped o'er his every feature?

ISRA.

Truly? *That?*

Great Powers! Why, thou'rt much more like a Prince!

ROLFE. I thank you, lady. Shall I make you known?

The Prince hath heard of you.

ISRA. No! Hath he? How?

ROLFE. Fame's trumpet carries far!

ISRA. Yes, but we're told
He hath no interest in womankind!

ROLFE. But try him, madam.

ISRA. Good young man, I will!

ROLFE. Sir Prince, this is the lady we have heard
Such raptures of. (SIR MERLYN turns to L., and
ROLFE backs above log to L.) 'Tis . . . she of
Saramede.

SIR MERLYN (*taking up position below tree.* ISRA
comes to L. of him.) Er—h'm! Approach thee,
wench!

(ROLFE leaves him to his doom and goes out. IMPOR-
TANT: ROLFE to exit behind tree and off R. 2. E.)
(Changing his tone.) Prithee, fair dame,
I fain would meet thee as thou should'st be met!
Thy pardon, then. I'm unprepared for this
—Er—h'm!—descent of angels. I am soiled
And torn. My costume old in shape and use . . .

(*Looking down anxiously at hose.*)

ISRA (*following his eye*). The shape's all right!

SIR MERLYN (*fearfully tickled*). What say'st thou,
saucy maid?

ISRA. Oh, sir, the truth *will* leap from out my lips
Before I've time to nip her by the tail!

(SIR MERLYN simply swells with vanity. ERMYN-
TRUDE, HILDA, MAUD enter L. I E., remain below
log; ISRA beckons; they come.)

Sir, have I leave to make these ladies known?

They're of the Court. MERLYN (*bus. with moustachios, etc.*) (*Over shoulder.*) For any sake at all Look not so all surprised! It is the Prince!

(MAUD giggles.)

SIR MERLYN. What? What? More maids?

ISRA. (ERMYNTRUDE *curtseys a step forward, then retires a step back.*) The Lady Ermyntrude. (*Bus.*)

(HILDA *curtseys a step forward, then retires a step back.*) The Lady Hilda, and the Lady Maud. (MAUD *curtseys a step forward, then retires a step back.*)

(*Bus., bows, etc.* MAUD giggles.)

SIR MERLYN (*frightfully coy*). Ha! Merry One see thee!

MAUD (*giggling*). Oh, Sir Prince, How we have dreamed of thee!

SIR MERLYN. Ha! H'm! Indeed! And am I like the vision of thy dreams?

(MAUD, *overcome with giggles, hides her face.*)

Nay, have no fear! Look on me, unafraid!

(PERLA, ZINDA, FREDALINE *enters L. I E.* MERLYN *a step down towards them*; ERMYNTRUDE, HILDA, MAUD *work round to R.C.* ISRA *remains slightly above and L. of SIR MERLYN.*)

Faith, it rains maids! Now, who are these?

ISRA. Oh, sir,
The Ladies Perla, (*bus.*), Zinda, (*bus.*), Fredaline (*bus.*)

(*After curtseying PERLA and ZINDA go a little up to log, FREDALINE left L. end of log. ISRA clutches at PERLA and ZINDA and tells them with giggles who he is. FREDALINE is left staring gloomily at him. He twirls his moustache at her.*)

SIR MERLYN. Well, do I please thee ?

FREDALINE. I am seldom pleased.

(He looks surprised. All gather round him.)

MAUD. Oh, dear Sir Prince, when come you to the Court ?

ERMYNTRUDE. You know, sir, others think to do as you.

PERLA. They love their freedom better than . . . well . . .

HILDA. *Us !*

ISRA. We do our best, but still they will not wed !

ZINDA. Even my cousin Hilli—

(Girls cough loudly and simultaneously. ZINDA pants but desists.)

SIR MERLYN. Tsha ! Well, well !
It seems they have grown fools in Saramede !

(Turning back to audience.)

Would I were seven men to wed ye all !

PERLA. Sir, how they've blackened you ! Why, it is said

You have no wish to look upon a maid !

SIR MERLYN. I ? I ? ? *(Swaggers down R., VERY fierce, then turns up again to PERLA.)* Show me the man that hath said so !

Split me his weasand for a lying knave !

(Going L.) Why, I have been a devil *(general movement from girls)*, doubt me not,

As both Adorer and—er—h'm !—Adored !

GIRLS. *What !*

SIR MERLYN. Trust me !

HILDA. Sir, but you have never been
In Saramede since you were three years old !

SIR MERLYN. I ? WHAT ? *(Pauses, suddenly remembers, then comes well down R., the girls close in round him.)* 'Tis true ' 'Twas not in Saramede. . . .

(The girls gather round closely.)

ISRA. OH! . . . Tell us, Prince! *(He shakes his head.)*

GIRLS. Yes, tell us!

MAUD. Princy, dear!

(ROSAMUND enters L. 2 E., comes slowly down L. side of log.)

SIR MERLYN *(with the last possible effect in the way of coyness)*. I'll tell each one in turn, alone, apart!

(The girls whisper together in two groups. ERMYN-TRUDE, HILDA, MAUD R. of MERLYN, ISRA, PERLA, ZINDA and FREDALINE, L. Their backs to MERLYN.)

What? What? Now, who comes first?

MAUD. Nay, dear Sir Prince. *(ROSAMUND gives a start and stops)*

We've scarcely a whole day! Take two at once! The rest shall follow, and await their turn!

SIR MERLYN *(twirling his moustache disappointedly)* 'Tis as ye wish. Now, here's a pair of arms!

(GIRLS rush at him. After a struggle ISRA and MAUD take each an arm.)

Ah, saucy jades! I thought so! I thought so!

(SIR MERLYN, with ISRA on his L. arm and MAUD on his R., is crossing towards L., stops. The rest of the girls behind MERLYN, slightly R.C. He turns, meeting ROSAMUND, whose eyes are wide with horror and disgust.)

Ha! By the Rood, who is this handsome maid?

ISRA. The Princess Rosamund, my sister, sir. *(To ROSAMUND.)* It is the Prince!

(ROSAMUND stares blankly at him.)

SIR MERLYN. How now! Is the maid blind?

(The Girls whisper together.)

ROSAMUND *(a tragic note in her voice)*. You are the Prince . . .

SIR MERLYN. Thou see'st me!

ROSAMUND. You . . . the Prince!

Our Dream! , . . Our Hero! . . .

SIR MERLYN *(kindly)*. There, be not afraid!

(SIR MERLYN half step to ROSAMUND, who goes up to L. of trees. ROSAMUND suddenly clutches at tree and hides her face, weeping.)

Quite overcome, poor wench! I've seen them thus!

ISRA. Sir Prince, I think she is not well. Please go!

SIR MERLYN. Yes, yes, I must not dazzle her too much,

Not all at once! 'Twere cruel so! Come, maids!

(They rush round him again. MAUD takes one R. arm, FREDALINE, R., the other.)

(To MAUD, who giggles.) Ah! Coy one!

(To FREDALINE, who stares at him coolly.) Puss!

There, there! 'Tis well! Now, now! . . .

(They exit laughing, L. 2 E. ISRA turns to ROSAMUND. ROLFE enters R. 2 E., and comes down R. of tree, stops.)

ISRA *(comes to R. of ROSAMUND)*. Sister! Dear Sister!

ROSAMUND. Leave me . . .

ISRA. Rosamund!

ROSAMUND. Go, Isra dear! . . . Nay, leave me!

All my dreams

Were mockeries. . . . Nay, I would wake alone . . .

Leave me . . .

ISRA. Oh, dear!

(Goes reluctantly after the others, with backward glances at ROSAMUND. ROLFE is watching from L.)

ROSAMUND. Oh, cruel jest of Fate!
 Oh, deadly blow! My country, lost, betrayed,
This is thy Knight, thy Hero-Knight, thy Hope,
 Thy Heart's Pulse, and thy Soul, this . . . popinjay!
 Oh, woe is me, indeed!

(ROLFE crosses slowly to c., slightly above log.)

ROLFE. Madam, you weep!

ROSAMUND. Ay, me, I weep! I mourn a soul's
 ideal!

I mourn a faith! I mourn a Land bereft!

I mourn an outraged people and their doom!

ROLFE. Why, how is this? What Land?

ROSAMUND. My Saramede . . .

ROLFE. Mine, too.

ROSAMUND. Then mourn with me . . .

ROLFE. What has befall?

ROSAMUND. Sir, we had dreamed, in Saramede,
 of one

Hid from his people's eyes, but not their hearts.
 A stainless, noble knight who, wrapped in dreams,
 Pondered apart on high, uplifted things.

Keeping a holy vigil, till the dawn

Whose summons should command him to come forth,
 And lead his people to'ard their destiny! . . .

ROLFE (*deeply touched*). Madam . . . a dream
 indeed!

ROSAMUND. (*sadly*). A dream . . indeed!

ROLFE. The Prince is but an erring, mortal
 man . . .

Yet, dearer to him even than his dreams

(And they are dear), his people and his Land!

(ROSAMUND looks scornful.)

Madam, he, too, has pictured such a Knight,
 And stumbled after him, oh, far away . . .
 But with a will to follow, and be true.

ROSAMUND. You jest, I think sir. I have seen
 the Prince.

ROLFE. You have not seen into his heart, as I !
Madam, I've searched it through and through with
tears.

And this I swear, though much unworthiness
Hath lodging, there's a passion infinite,
Strong as heart's beat and vital as the breath,
To serve her whom he prays for night and day !
Whom in his dreams he sees march down the years
Steadfast among the nations, stern, controlled.
Rich with the wealth of honour, knowledge, faith.
Mighty in deeds of right, and crowned with truth !

ROSAMUND (*carried away*). Ay, that's *my* dream !
(*Turning to him*.) Oh, Heav'n, would I could think
It were the Prince's, too !

ROLFE. Madam——

ROSAMUND. Ah, no ! . . .

(ROSAMUND *comes slightly to* ROLFE.)

'Tis your own heart you've read to me, not his !
Would his but glowed as warm, but beat as true !
It is a patriot's heart ! Who are you, sir ?

ROLFE. A very humble servant of the State.

ROSAMUND. I know you not, I think, in Saramede?

ROLFE. No, madam.

ROSAMUND. Ah . . . you come not to our Court.

ROLFE. No, madam.

ROSAMUND. No . . . I should not have forgot.

ROLFE. I'm . . . a rough fellow of the Outer
Woods.

(ROLFE *goes down* R.C.)

ROSAMUND. Not rough, I think. And with a
poet's soul.

ROLFE. I lack the air of Courts.

ROSAMUND. Indeed, 'tis true !

There are not *many* there your double, sir.

ROLFE. My tongue is not attuned to courtly
phrase.

ROSAMUND. To *courtier's* phrase.

ROLFE. It knows not how to please.

ROSAMUND (*softly*). I think it doth !

(ROSAMUND *a step up to L. of tree.*)

How brown you are, and strong !

(ROSAMUND *sits under C. of tree.*)

ROLFE. I am a hunter, madam.

ROSAMUND. Poet, too !

How strange a blend !

(ROLFE *coming to R. of ROSAMUND.*)

ROLFE. I fear you laugh at me.
Am I so strange ?

ROSAMUND. Perchance 'twas not the word
I had in mind. But it will serve.

ROLFE. You laugh !

ROSAMUND. Nay, sir, I laugh not. I do think you
are

Whom maids would treat with serious intent . . .
Is't not so ?

ROLFE. I'm at loss ! You jest with me !
What maids ? I know none.

ROSAMUND. Is it so indeed ?

ROLFE. In very deed. I've seen none till to-day.

(ROSAMUND *turns from him and picks a flower.*)

ROSAMUND. Why then, you share the exile of the
Prince ?

ROLFE. Ay, madam, every day of it.

ROSAMUND. By choice ?

(ROLFE *bows.*)

The glitter of the city calls you not ?

ROLFE. Madam, I have the sunlight on the sea.

ROSAMUND. To know men's hearts are beating
at your frown !

ROLFE. Madam, I know the beat of Nature's
heart.

ROSAMUND. Men's voices raised in choruses of praise!

ROLFE. Madam . . . alone, I hear the winds praise God.

(Pause. She turns her head from him.)

ROSAMUND. Ay . . . so with him I dreamed of! . . .

(Pause.)

ROLFE. You are vexed,
Madam: I have displeased you?

ROSAMUND. Nay, indeed . . .
I was but musing only. Then you dwell
Here, in your dreams, sir?

ROLFE *(crosses to R. of log)*. Ay, too much, I fear!
There is a point dreams cease, day should begin.

(ROLFE sits R. end of log, his chin in hand.)

I dream all night I'm fit to meet the day,
And then—I hesitate, and dream again.

ROSAMUND. I think there is a Touch-stone hid in
Time
When found will test the metal of our dreams . . .
Are they true gold? . . . Our lives shall speak for
that.

ROLFE *(rises)*. A Touch-stone, madam?

ROSAMUND. Ay?

ROLFE *(a step towards her, stops)*. Necessity?

ROSAMUND *(half-smiling)*. Nay!

ROLFE *(coming to L. of ROSAMUND)*. Obligation?
Opportunity?

(She shakes her head.)

You seek it?

ROSAMUND. Sir . . . I think 'tis seeking me . . .

ROLFE. Tell me its name, that I may seek it, too!

ROSAMUND. Hast thou ne'er fancied, just beyond
thy dreams

Something was lurking in the summer dusk . . .
 A breath, a secret, and a mystery . . .
 Something the night was trembling to reveal . . .
 Something that brushed thy heart—yet touched thee
 not . . .

ROLFE (*sits L. of ROSAMUND*). Tell me . . .

ROSAMUND (*dreamily*). I dream there is a day
 will come,

If I am humble, patient, selfless, . . . pure . . .
 When my heart's eyes will open to a face . . .
 My heart's ears to the whisper of a voice . . .
 My heart's heart to the summons of . . . a kiss . . .

(*Pause.*)

Then will the Touch-stone strike upon my soul

ROLFE. On truest gold, I swear! Why, how the
 books

Have drawn thee all awry! I thought a maid
 Was but an idle, pretty, shallow thing,
 With childish hands to catch what glittered best!
 Instead, she is a treasury of grace,
 Filled with rare thoughts, and exquisite romance!
 How are we blest! . . . Dream other maids as thou?

ROSAMUND. I know no maiden's dreams save mine
 alone.

A maiden does not speak her dearest dreams
 Save to her secret heart . . .

(*Suddenly pauses, startled, dazed, breathless.*)

Yet . . . I tell thee! . . .

Oh! . . . Why?

(*Their eyes meet. She rises and turns as though to
 leave him. He catches her L. hand.*)

ROLFE. Nay, leave me not!

(*He kisses her hand.*)

ROSAMUND (*breathlessly*). I pray thee, sir! . . .

(She withdraws her hand, ROLFE rises. ROSAMUND goes down R. slowly and exits R. I E.)

ROLFE (*passionately*). Now know I all the secret of the rose!

Now could I read the message of the stars!
Set words unto the night-bird's pulsing song,
And throb with all the throbbing heart of Spring!
Now am I justified, fulfilled, complete!
Now through me, as through all, God's purpose flows!
Now am I one upon the living chain
That links Creation to Eternity!

(Goes out R.)

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

Afternoon of the same day.

(MARTHA enters with MAUD on her R. arm, ISRA on her L., enter L. 2 E. They come slowly down C., followed by HILDA, PERLA and ZINDA, who come down behind log.)

MAUD. Beware! Beware! There is a lurking root!

ISRA. We would not have thee fall on thy dear nose,

Sweet Martha!

MAUD. Kindest soul!

MARTHA (*chuckling*). What's now, ye jades?

MAUD. 'Tis naught—that is.

ISRA.

We love thee!

MARTHA.

Baggages!

(MARTHA sits C. of log. ISRA L. of her with back to audience. MAUD and HILDA to R. of MARTHA. ZINDA L. PERLA comes in front of log at MARTHA'S feet. They sit.)

What is't ye want of me? Your honeyed words
And coaxing eyes have purpose, that I'll swear!

PERLA. Tell us now . . . where's the Prince?

GIRLS.

Ay, where is he?

MARTHA. Belike he sleeps. Belike he's at his books.

HILDA (*disgustedly*). His books!

MARTHA.

Ay, pretty one!

HILDA. He doth not look
A man of *books*. He hath a royal air.
MAUD. Tell us, good Martha, if the Prince hath
dwelt

So long upon this Isle afar from man——

ISRA. And woman!

MAUD. Then, how is it he hath caught
The very manner of a lady's knight?

MARTHA. The *Prince*?

ZINDA. Ay, sooth! I have not seen the like
Save in my royal cousin——

GIRLS (*singing loudly*). La! La! La!

(ZINDA *pouts*.)

MARTHA. By Cupid's bow, your shot is fallen wide!
He hath no knowledge of your naughty ways!
He ne'er hath prest a waist, or sipped a lip,
Or gazed in eyes, or played such courtier's tricks,
In all his life of eight-and-twenty years!

MAUD (*with a little cough*). Hath he not so, in-
deed? I am mistook!

(*The Girls avoid each other's glances with vast uncon-
sciousness.*)

PERLA (*nestling against MARTHA*). Would it not
please thee see thy nurseling wed?

(*All draw closer. MARTHA looks from one to the other
with a grin.*)

MARTHA. Maybe! Maybe! But where is there
a bride?

ISRA. One *might* be found!

MAUD. Perchance quite easily!

PERLA. Dost thou not think a gentle maid, and
fair——

(*Other Girls look dissenting.*)

ZINDA. Who, sooth, can claim close kin to
Royalty—

(*Bus.*)

MAUD. Who hath a merry way, and laughing
eyes—

(*Bus.*)

HILDA. The very height to grace a royal gown—

ISRA. No o'erblown monster. Something slight,
and small!

MARTHA. Ye rogues! Ye teasing mischiefs!

PERLA (*sweetly*). Well, perchance

He hath already chose. . . . An hour ago

Dear Ermyntrude withdrew to mend her robe

I saw no tear in. . . . And dear Fredaline

Was very sure she had a stroke of sun.

(*Girls realize and sit up.*)

MAUD. Why, sooth, 'tis true!

HILDA (*rising quickly*). Think you they're with
the Prince?

(*Without waiting for an answer she turns and hurries
off L. I. E., with a determined air.*)

MARTHA (*chuckling*). Perchance! Perchance!

ZINDA (*rises quickly*). The scheming, wicked
things! (*Goes off L. 2 E.*)

MAUD (*rising goes up C. and off L. U.E., calling*).
Fredaline! (*Disappears.*)

PERLA (*rising, goes out L.I.E., calling*). Dearest
Ernie! (*Under her breath.*) Little cat! (*Dis-
appears.*)

ISRA (*who has been watching MARTHA, comes round
L. of log to L. of her*). Thou knowest where the
Prince is, I believe!

MARTHA. Ay, that I do!

ISRA. Then tell, thou naughty dame!

MARTHA. Sure, he is with thy sister, the Princess.
And hath been, hour on hour.

ISRA (*amazed and annoyed*). With Rosamund?

MARTHA. With Princess Rosamund, in very truth.

ISRA. What does he with *her*?

MARTHA. Why, I think, at last
He hath took down and opened . . . an old book
He ne'er hath read in yet. Though all do, once,
If but to glance upon the title-page . . .
I, too, have read. . . ay, very long ago! . . .

ISRA. I understand thee not! How? In what book?

With Rosamund? . . . Oh, *dear*!

MARTHA. See, here they come!

(*They watch, as ROSAMUND and ROLFE (he above her) enter R. 2 E.; they stop R. of tree. ISRA bursts into a merry laugh.*)

ISRA. Thou wicked, naughty woman, with thy jests! (*ISRA hurries out L. 1. E.*)

MARTHA. What jests, thou little feather-brain?
How now?

Ay, me! (*Sighs.*) I am not needed more! . . .

Ay, me! . . .

(*MARTHA exits L. 1 E., as ROLFE and ROSAMUND comes below tree, then follows ISRA off. ROLFE and ROSAMUND go C. She carrying flowers.*)

ROLFE. This sacred, dearest grove! 'Tis here we met,

Within the shadow-ring of this old tree!

(*ROSAMUND sits R. under tree, ROLFE L. of her.*)

Wilt rest thee? Come! I love thee! Dost thou hear?

(ROSAMUND *bends her head over the flowers.*)

Give me a rose ! (*She holds one to him.*)

Nay, nay, it something lacks !

It lacks the precious burden of a kiss !

But touch it to thy lips, and it will bloom

For ever, in the fields of Paradise !

(*She kisses one and gives it to him.*)

Dost know who kissed thee, rose ? Why, it was she,

Rose-of-the-world, of whom thou'rt but a hint,

A breath of all her sweetness . . . therefore dear !

(*To ROSAMUND.*) Art happy ?

ROSAMUND. Ay !

ROLFE. Thou lov'st me ? Tell me so !

ROSAMUND. I love thee !

ROLFE. Yet again !

ROSAMUND (*smiling*). Why ? . . . Hast forgot ?

ROLFE. Ay, all but thee ! All, *all* but only thee !

ROSAMUND. 'Tis little to remember !

ROLFE. 'Tis the world !

One world ? 'Tis all the sky's uncounted stars !

ROSAMUND. I tremble at our happiness ! Oh, love,

I am a woman, not a poet's dream !

When crossed, I may be angry, use sharp words,
Be obstinate ! Where will thy stars be then ?

ROLFE. 'Tis that thou art a woman I give thanks !
Why, storms but serve to keep the earth more green ;
Snows overpast but make the spring more dear !
The unclouded passion of the ceaseless sun
Sucks life from life, till naught but dust remains.
Storm, if thou wilt, and keep my garden fair !

ROSAMUND. Love, if we had not met ! It shakes
my heart

To think how finely balanced is our fate !

ROLFE. By all the Eternal Laws, we *must* have
met !

We were two halves of a long-severed soul . . .
Dost thou not feel ere Time was we were *one*?

ROSAMUND. I cannot *think* a life without thee,
now . . .

ROLFE. Is't so, my love? Is't so, my Rosamund?

ROSAMUND. I did not know my name was half so
sweet!

ROLFE. Dost know thou hast not whispered me
my name,

Not once, since first I loved thee? . . .

ROSAMUND. That's . . . an hour!

ROLFE. An aeon, sweet! We do not measure
time

By march of sun, but by the pulse of hearts.

Since sight of thee, mine own hath beat so fast

Already I have loved thee just as long

As that same sun hath tramped his faithful course!

Dost know . . . thou hast not granted me . . . a
kiss,

Since first I loved thee?

ROSAMUND. Ah, not yet, not yet!

'Tis all so new, so strange! . . . I am a-whirl!

I fear to lose my very soul in thine! . . .

Nay, nay, I *fear* not, but . . . not yet!

ROLFE (*very tenderly*). My own!

(*He kisses her hand. SIR MERLYN, with ERMYNTRUDE
on his R. arm, and FREDALINE on his L., enter
L.U.E., remain at back. ROSAMUND, raising her
head sees them. ROLFE sees her look, follows it,
and sees them.*)

ROSAMUND. The Prince!

ROLFE. The *Prince*? (*Rises, comes down R.*).

Ah . . . yes!

I had forgot. . . .

ROSAMUND. That mincing gallant is our Country's
hope,

Our Land's defence! (*Rises, comes down R.*) Our
Land that needs a *man*!

I had forgot, lost in these golden hours,
The purpose ever steadfast in my mind . . .
For danger threats.

ROLFE (*quickly*). *Danger?* . . . I had not heard!

ROSAMUND. Doubtless they've kept it secret
from the Prince.

I wonder not, indeed! Dissensions rise.

There are men say, "The King is old and ill,
The Prince a dreamer. . . . Let us change the
Line!" . . .

ROLFE. Now, by the stars, I have heard naught
of this!

Tell me, *belov'd*!

ROSAMUND. There's treachery toward.

(ROSAMUND *and* ROLFE *go up to tree*. ROSAMUND *sits*
R. C., ROLFE *standing*, as MERLYN *with* ERMYN-
TRUDE *and* FREDALINE *stroll down* C. *They*
talk. MERLYN *is in the full tide of anecdotal*
oratory.)

SIR MERLYN. Hundreds, I swear! And I from
very shame
Was forced to hide. (*Stops.*) In sooth, was forced
to hide,
They pestered so! (*Walking.*) Their husbands
prayed me leave
The town, ay, prest it at sword's point. (*Stops.*)
Again
In Bonavenla lived a little maid
Who saw my picture once—but once!—and died!
(*Walks.*)

FREDALINE. Only thy picture!

SIR MERLYN. And again (*stops*) in Spain
A *señorita* . . . *ah!* . . . (*Blows a kiss, walks.*)

FREDALINE. Thou should'st not have
Thy picture spread so wide. There's ill enough.

(SIR MERLYN *sees* ROSAMUND, *crosses to her*; ERMYN-
TRUDE *and* FREDALINE *go to R.C. level with tree*,

as HILDA, PERLA, MAUD and ZINDA hurry on from L.U.E. ; they come to above log facing ERMYNTRUDE and FREDALINE.)

HILDA. Stay ! Stay ! Did ye not hear me cry " hold on " ?

ERMYNTRUDE. We thought thou said'st " go on ! " and hurried more !

(Sits on log L.)

MAUD. Did'st mend thy gown. (*Sniffs and sits above log L.*) 'Tis neatly done, I swear,

Why, one could almost think 'twas never torn !

PERLA. How is thy stroke of sun, dear Fredaline ?

FREDALINE. 'Tis healed from wand'ring with a moon-struck fool.

(PERLA sniffs and comes down to L. of MAUD.)

SIR MERLYN (to ROSAMUND). Permit me share thy rustic couch, fair maid !

(ROSAMUND looks uneasy.)

GIRLS (*general movement forward from Girls*). Oh, dear Sir Prince !

MAUD. Here ! Here, upon this log !

(*They pat log invitingly.*)

SIR MERLYN (*trying to combine a deprecating glance at ROSAMUND with a coy one at the Girls*). Forgive me, lady ! They are pressing me !

(MERLYN goes down L. to log, sits C., Girls all try to sit on log. PERLA and MAUD L. of him, ZINDA, HILDA from the back, ERMYNTRUDE and FREDALINE R. of him—a musical chairs movement.)

How now, thou naughty maids ! Wilt have me so ?

(*Falls back over log. They re-instate him.*) .

ZINDA (*hurrying round L. of log to his feet*). Dear Prince, hast met my royal c——

GIRLS (*sneezing loudly*). Ah-Tchoo !

SIR MERLYN. Thy *what*, dear maid ?

ZINDA. My cousin Hi——

GIRLS. AH-TCHOO !!

(ZINDA *desists*.)

SIR MERLYN (*a little puzzled*). I do not know the name.

(ISRA *runs in* L.U.E., *and down c., well below log*.)

ISRA. Ah, *there* ye be !

Ye lazy, lazy, lazy, lazy ones !

Come, wake ye ! Rouse ye ! Dearests, ye'll grow fat !

(*Curtseys*.) Sir Prince, naught's like the dance to keep one slim !

(As thou art !) Freda a measure with me, now !

MAUD (*jumping up*). Let us *all* dance !

GIRLS (*ditto*). Yes, yes !

ISRA. Come then ! (*To* MERLYN.) Sir Prince ?

SIR MERLYN. Nay, nay, I have forgot my steps !

ISRA. Ah, sir,

Can'st thou refuse me ? Why then, I protest I'm not, 'tis very plain, quite to thy mind !

(*He protests*.)

Oh, I will dance with Zinda ! And for thee, Take thee another maiden ! Maud ! Where's Maud ? Come hither ! Dear, the Prince would dance with thee !

SIR MERLYN. Nay, nay !

MAUD (*laughing*). Nay ?

(SIR MERLYN *horribly distressed*.)

ISRA. Sir, perchance she'll please thee more ! (*Joining their hands*.) Ah ! 'Tis a match so !

SIR MERLYN. Sweet one ! I . . .

ISRA (*clapping her hands*). Begin !

(*All dance, except ROLFE and ROSAMUND deep in talk*.)

FREDALINE. Had he his picture painted *thus*,
in sooth

It could prove naught but fatal!

PERLA. Ah! He's sweet!

Dear Isra, 'tis a clever little maid!

HILDA. Pooh! There are others dance as well
as Maud!

PERLA. I meant not *that*.

(The dance goes on.)

ZINDA. I would that ye could see——

(Girls put their fingers to their ears. Suddenly

ROLFE rises. As he does so the music stops.)

ROLFE. Why, then, the night of dreams is over-
past,

The dawn of action's here! Cease, friends, I beg!

(Dance breaks up. All look amazed.)

Pray give us leave! *(Touches SIR MERLYN on the
shoulder.)*

I've much to say to thee,

Come thou apart awhile! *(Going.)*

There's work to do! . . .

*(ROLFE and SIR MERLYN exit L. U. E. SIR MERLYN
goes like a lamb. The Girls look at each other in
surprise.)*

MAUD. Ye saw!

ZINDA. A very rude young man!

HILDA. Were I

The Prince, I would have hacked me off his head!

PERLA. He's such a gentle sweet!

ERMYNTRUDE *(holding her dress as though it were
torn)*. There now! Again!

I must to Martha! *(Goes out L. U. E.)*

MAUD *(winking at the others)*. I'll companion thee!

(Runs out after her.)

FREDALINE (*gives a deep groan, clutches her head and goes up c.*)

PERLA. Dearest, thou'rt ill! Thou should'st not go alone!

(FREDALINE hurries out, PERLA follows. ZINDA and HILDA turn simultaneously and catch each other's eye, then suddenly burst into a silent walking-race. They disappear c., HILDA well in the lead. ROSAMUND is leaning against the tree, deep in thought. ISRA goes to L. of tree and sits on bank. She sees ROSAMUND is far away, so gives a loud sigh.)

ROSAMUND (*turning, with a smile*). Hast left the hunt, my little sister?

ISRA. Ay!

ROSAMUND. Art wearied of thy madcap fancy?

ISRA. Nay. . . .

ROSAMUND. Pray Heaven give him swiftly many tongues

To rouse the Prince see where his duty lies!

ISRA (*bridling a little on behalf of the pseudo Prince, with a rather annoyed little glance at ROSAMUND*).

He hath a noble soul!

ROSAMUND (*mistaking her*). Indeed he hath!

ISRA. A kind and loving heart!

ROSAMUND. Thou seest it, too?

ISRA. A very gentle knight!

ROSAMUND. Gentle, but strong!

ISRA (*pensively*). Perchance! Perchance!

ROSAMUND. Indeed, a Prince of men!

ISRA. He's that, in sooth, of right! But I could wish

He were not quite so high!

ROSAMUND. Nay, fret thee not,

He's human, too.

ISRA. I trust so!

ROSAMUND. Ah! . . . I know.

ISRA. *Thou* dost ?

ROSAMUND. Who should but I, who little thought
When I set out upon this whimsied quest,
That I should find my Prince of Dreams indeed !
Be called to rule the Kingdom of his heart !

ISRA. What say'st thou, Rosamund ?

ROSAMUND. Art angry, dear ?
Dost think he is too low for me ?

ISRA (*petulantly*). Too *low* ?
He hath an ample height, a healthy height !
I hate your may-pole men !

ROSAMUND. Why, Isra dear ?

ISRA (*slowly rising*). He doth not love *thee* !

ROSAMUND. Ay, indeed he doth !

ISRA (*stamping her foot*). Oh, dear ! oh, dear !

'Tis as the old nurse said,
Only I'd not believe her !

ROSAMUND. Dearest chick,
It sure is naught to thee !

ISRA. Nay, then, it is !
Ne'er have I known such greed in thee before !

ROSAMUND. *Greed* ?

ISRA. Greed !

ROSAMUND. I understand thee not !

ISRA. Just . . . *greed* !

ROSAMUND. But thou hast scarce had speech of
him !

ISRA. What, *I* ?
Thou thinkest *that* because I have not hung
All day about his neck, as *others* have !

ROSAMUND. As others have ? (*Rises a little to,*

ISRA.) How now, thou wayward child !
Dar'st speak unto thy sister thus ?

ISRA. 'Tis hard,
'Tis passing hard ! I have not often seen
A gallant that did seize my fancy so !

ROSAMUND. *Thy* fancy, feather-head ! He's not
for thee.

ISRA. I'd not swear to't were I thee, Rosamund,

For he hath whispered in mine ear——

ROSAMUND (*sternly*). Be still!
 (*More lightly.*) Thou art a mischievous and idle child,
 Thy fancies lead thee very far astray.
 Return unto thy playmates. Keep thy tongue
 From wagging o'er the name of him I love!

ISRA (*stamping her foot in a small fury*). BAH!!

(*Runs out L. I E.*)

ROSAMUND. Foolish little maid! Another toy
 Will swift replace an idle moment's choice! . . .
 I wonder not he's dreamed away his days!
 Who would not dream in such a world as this!
 The dim, green home of her, whose healing breath
 Blows resinous from yonder dreaming trees . . .

(*Song.*)

(*At end of song ROSAMUND to sit C. of log. SIR
 MERLYN enters L.U.E., comes down C.*)

How fares he with the Prince? Perchance there lies
 In that complacent soul, a vital seed
 Awaiting the compelling of the sun—
 Truth's sun—— (*Sees SIR MERLYN*). It is the
 Prince. . . I would I dared! . . .

(*Impulsively ROSAMUND rises, a step to MERLYN.*) Sir!
 SIR MERLYN. Lady?

ROSAMUND. May I, dare I ask of thee
 If the appeal unto thy heart is vain?
 I think thou can'st not guess the depth of love
 That but awaits thy call!

SIR MERLYN (*surprised but coy*). Madam . . .
 indeed!

ROSAMUND (*seeing his surprise*). Hath he not spoke
 to thee but now?

SIR MERLYN (*still puzzled*). He hath!

ROSAMUND. Then give me leave speak for myself!

SIR MERLYN. What! What!

ROSAMUND. An hundred, hundred hearts hold thee
at core !

SIR MERLYN. I know it, madam ! 'Tis no fault
of mine !

ROSAMUND. No *fault* ? Nay then, 'tis time to
prove it now !

Could I but touch *thy* heart to wake response !

But find the words to pierce into thy soul . . .

Lacking thee, sir, the end comes very soon. . . .

SIR MERLYN. The end ? Nay, nay, dear maid
that must not be !

I would I were not quite so fatal !

ROSAMUND (*puzzled*). Sir ?

SIR MERLYN. I would that there were *more* of me !

ROSAMUND (*looking at him*). More, sir ?

I fear I do not follow.

SIR MERLYN (*as ROSAMUND gets visibly uneasy*).

Sweetest chuck,

If I should grant *thy* pray'r, why, there are those
On whom 'twould fall as a most mighty blow !

ROSAMUND. I would that it should fall right
speedily !

SIR MERLYN (*holding up his finger*). Nay, nay ! Be
kind ! They would be sore displeased !

Indeed, to tell thee true. . . . I am afraid. . . .

ROSAMUND. *Afraid* ? (*Pause*.) How foolish I
thus to have hoped !

SIR MERLYN. Let me thy brother be, or else thy
coz !

ROSAMUND. Jest not with me, I am too sore at
heart. (*ROSAMUND sits L. of log.*)

Sir (*bitterly*.) I have dreamed of thee for many years !

SIR MERLYN (*surprised but flattered to death*). For
many years ?

(*MERLYN sits R. of ROSAMUND.*)

Say on, fair maid, say on ! (*Encouragingly.*)

ROSAMUND. Always of one all gracious, knightly,
bold,

With splendid presence to compel the world,
Fearless and chivalrous, a soul of fire!

SIR MERLYN. Why, thou hast seen me, then, ere
this!

ROSAMUND (*turning from him with hopeless disgust*).

Nay, sir,

Save in my dreams.

SIR MERLYN. And yet thou hast me pat!

ROSAMUND (*rises, then gos R. quickly*). Oh!

SIR MERLYN (*rises*). Nay, then, pretty one, nay,
fly me not!

ROSAMUND. Oh, sir . . .

SIR MERLYN (*comes to L. of ROSAMUND*). Nay, fear
me not!

ROSAMUND. My fear is for
Myself, and those betrayed hearts I love. . . .

SIR MERLYN. What! What! Nay, thou can'st
trust me, that I swear!

Come, sit with me beneath this sheltering tree!

(*Takes her arm.*)

ROSAMUND. Release me, sir! (*He drops her arm
quickly.*)

Nor venture 'neath that tree
Lest it should blast thee! (*Terrified, he looks from
her to tree.*)

'Tis a sacred place.
It hath known death of hope and birth of love. . . .
Keep thou thy flat and foolish feet from it!

(*ROSAMUND crosses MERLYN to L. I E., and exit.*)

SIR MERLYN (*mortified and amazed*). My flat and
foolish— Zounds! The maid is crazed!
Or blind! Belike both crazed *and* blind, in sooth!
My flat and foolish—flat, AND foolish!—Tcha! . . .
(*Going.*) Good lack! I' faith! Did'st ever hear
the like! . . .

My fla—nay, nay! Tcha! Pooh! The maid is
crazed! . . .

(SIR MERLYN exits R. I E., *muttering and holding up his feet in turn to look at them.*)

(ROLFE and MARTHA enter L.U.E., coming C. *He has his hand on her shoulder and is talknig earnestly. He is all the man of action now.*)

ROLFE. So, seest thou, when the boat returns at eve

To take the maidens hence to Saramede,
I go with them. There is a traitor there.
My father is too old to stand alone,
Too old to see beneath the smiling face
To the foul heart. My Land hath need of me.

MARTHA (*they stop*). Why, lad, what's come to thee?

ROLFE. My manhood's dawn
That hath been so delayed. The sun is ris'n.
Dreams fly when day begins!

MARTHA. Now, by the Rood,
My nurseling surely stands a man indeed,
A Prince in very truth! How wert thou waked?

ROLFE. A goddess stooped and breathed upon
my soul. . . .

MARTHA. Dear lad, mine eyes are old, but quick
to see!

Thou hast been very close to my old heart. . . .
There! There! Youth turns to youth! I trow
me well,

She is a maiden to adorn the Crown!

ROLFE. She is the Crown itself!

MARTHA. Thou't make her Queen?

ROLFE. Ay, if there's grace in Heav'n! With her
beside,

Her noble faith to strengthen my right arm,
Her sure, high spirit for my soul's remede,
A weakling I, in truth, were I to fail!

MARTHA. Indeed, I thank the idle wind of jest
That bore these maidens hither! Well, the jades,
t

They said thou should'st be wed! They'll have their
 will
 If not their wish! 'Twas, "Think you he will wed
 A maid like . . . thus and so?" Each innocent
 Proffered her mirror's picture as a guide!

(*During this ROLFE to tree, sits.*)

Eh, but I'll gladly see the world again,
 I had forgot the flavour . . . 'tis so long. . . .

(*Babbling reminiscently.*)

ROLFE. 'Twill be full night before the city's
 reached,
 And so, unknown, unseen, I'll be within
 The Palace walls ere treachery can coil.

(*ROLFE rises, going down R.*)

I seem to stand in Action's very heart!
 Roads open out to me where-e'er I gaze! . . .
 Heav'n give me pow'r choose wisely and act swift!
 Ah, I am waked indeed! ; . .

(*ROLFE exits R. I E.*)

MARTHA (*sitting under tree*). Give thanks for it!
 It is a gracious day for Saramede!

(*ROSAMUND enters L. I E. singing. MARTHA watches her.*)

ROSAMUND. Ah, nurse, I did not see thee!

MARTHA. Hither, maid (*ROSAMUND hithers*).
 And let me look into thy face! (*ROSAMUND kneels*).

And so
 Thou, lightly come upon a summer jest,
 Hast touched a dreamer and hast found a man!

ROSAMUND. Ah, he hath told thee, then?

MARTHA. Maid, I have eyes!

ROSAMUND. 'Tis true he loves me.

MARTHA (*teasingly*). Say'st thou so indeed?
But thou, thou lov'st him not at all, I swear!

ROSAMUND. Thou should'st not swear, 'tis wrong
—and foolish, too,
For thou art much mistook!

MARTHA (*chuckling*). Tush! Tell me not!

ROSAMUND. Hast seen my sister? I do seek for
her.

MARTHA. Good sooth, I have so! 'Tis a merry
wench!
Would find the Prince a bride, eh? Well, the Prince
Hath found one for himself, ha! ha!

ROSAMUND. Hath he?

MARTHA. "Hath he," indeed!

ROSAMUND. I know not.

MARTHA. Nay, fie! fie!

What, hath thy lover so misled thee, then?
Did he not, whisp'ring in thine ear his love,
Whisper his purpose, too?

ROSAMUND. His purpose? How?

MARTHA. To make thee Queen!

ROSAMUND. To make me Queen? . . .

MARTHA.

Anon!

The Prince must come into his kingdom soon.

(ROSAMUND *rising slowly*.)

The old King fails.

ROSAMUND (*aghast*). The Prince!

MARTHA. What ails thee, maid,

Since the Prince loves thee, and would wed with thee!
Thou know'st it!

ROSAMUND (*horrified*). Wed . . . the Prince!

MARTHA. In sooth, of course!

Thou'rt of the blood! What did'st thou think?

Tut tut!

If ever I . . . nay, see! Thou hast awoke

The sleeping passion of his patriot soul.

He swears by Heaven's grace to make thee Queen.

He saith thou wilt be strength, and faith, and life
Unto the King! The very Crown itself!

ROSAMUND (*in agony*). He loves me not! (*Goes
down below log*).

MARTHA. Because he'd make thee Queen?
Nay, come from out thy foolish world of dreams!
Heav'n give the maiden sense. (*Coming down to*

ROSAMUND *at L.*) Can he not be
Thy lover still when thou art wed?

(ROSAMUND *sinks down on log with a cry and hides her
face.*)

How now?
If thou art not in truth the strangest maid! . . .

(*Looks at her puzzled, then turns to go.*)

I'll send thy love to thee! He'll read thee sense!

(MARTHA *hurries off R. I E.*)

(*Goes out R.*)

ROSAMUND. Oh, I am all distraught! My heart
is broke!

Oh, I am shamed indeed! That he could dream
To use me so. . . . Oh, Heav'n! I did not know
There was such pain at all! To wed the Prince
And love . . . *him*! Horrible! That was his aim!
The lofty purpose of his patriot soul!
Would I were blind, who see it all . . . too clear!
He willed to use me! Use the pow'r at back!
Command the Throne, through *me*, and rule the King!
Oh! . . . horrible indeed! How easily
His foolish prey was trapped! A look, a smile,
A word, a touch of hand . . . the thing was done!

(ROLFE *enters R. I E., coming to ROSAMUND at log.*)

ROLFE. Is aught amiss, dear love?

ROSAMUND (*with a sound of horror*). Ah ! . . .

ROLFE. Rosamund !

ROSAMUND. Ay, Rosamund, poor fool !

(*He puts his hand on her shoulder. She writhes away.*)

Nay ! Nay ! . . .

ROLFE. What's here ?

Thou shrinkest as though poisoned, from my touch !
What's here ?

ROSAMUND. It is my soul that shrinks from
thee !

Keep back ! I would not have thy *shadow* fall ! . . .

ROLFE. Mine ears are crazed ! They cannot hear
aright !

Nay, thou art surely held in some foul dream !
Awake thee, love, awake !

ROSAMUND (*rises*). I am awake . . .

And ne'er shall dream again. . . .

ROLFE. What horror's here ?

What spell hath fallen on thy gentle heart ?

What madness darts from out thy loving eyes,

And parts the tender gate-way of thy lips

To lay waste all our new-won world of joy !

ROSAMUND. Ah, mock me not ! I know thee . . .
as thou art !

(*Pause.*)

ROLFE. Ah ! . . . thou hast learnt the truth of
me ? Indeed,

I feel much shame to have deceived thee so.

But, love, be not thus angered ! 'Twas a whim,

Born of a summer fancy, and a mood !

A light jest lightly played, without a thought !

And when, anon, in thine eyes deepest truth

I saw my life's dawn rise ; and knew it was

Myself that thou did'st love, and not *the Prince*,

'Twas sweet to play it longer !

ROSAMUND. Ah ! each word

Thou utterest makes insult sharper edged !

ROLFE. Is it an insult, then, that 'tis the Prince
Who loves thee, not some nameless churl?

(*Pause.*)

ROSAMUND. Go! I can bear no more!

(SIR MERLYN *enters* R. I E.)

ROLFE. Thou art unjust!

ROSAMUND. Unjust!

ROLFE. I thought thy spirit was too rare
For such small angers.

ROSAMUND. Small!

ROLFE. Ay, very small!

A small hurt pride, that writhes, and turns, and stings!
Where is my maid of dreams? . . .

ROSAMUND (*brokenly*). She is no more. . .

(ROSAMUND *crosses to C. Turns on* SIR MERLYN
(*impetuously.*)

Sir, I will wed with thee!

(ROLFE *starts forward.* SIR MERLYN'S *jaw drops.*)

SIR MERLYN. Madam! . . . You said? . . .

ROSAMUND. Sir, I will wed with thee!

ROLFE. Nay, Rosamund!

ROSAMUND. Be silent! (*To* SIR MERLYN.) Sir,
what sayst thou?

SIR MERLYN (*terribly scared*). Madam! . . . I . . .

ROSAMUND. Not here! Give me thine arm!
Lead me apart!

(ROSAMUND *and* MERLYN *exit* R. I E. *She takes*
his arm and goes out in a white whirl of anger

and impulse. He is frightened out of his wits and very wobbly at the knees.)

ROLFE. Rosamund! . . . Rosamund!

(Follows them out with every sign of horror and amazement.)

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

Evening, towards sunset.

(FREDALINE, MAUD and ZINDA appear at different points ; MAUD, R. 1 E. ; ZINDA, L. 1 E. ; FREDALINE, R. 2 E., walking slowly and gloomily. They are followed almost immediately by PERLA, HILDA and ERMYNTRUDE. PERLA, L. 2 E. ; HILDA, R.U.E. ; ERMYNTRUDE, L.U.E.)

MAUD (*flopping down under tree c.*). Heigho !

ZINDA (*flopping L. of MAUD*). Heigho !

FREDALINE (*R. of MAUD*). Heigho !

(Pause. Others draw near.)

MAUD. 'Twill soon be dark.

FREDALINE. Ay, very soon ! I think a storm will come.

(Pause.)

PERLA (*sits below ZINDA and looks at them. They all turn their heads to look at her. Then she speaks.*

Heigho !

HILDA (*sits below FREDALINE*). Heigho !

ERMYNTRUDE (*sits L. of ZINDA*). Heigho !

PERLA. Dear Rosamund,

We have not wished her joy !

(All look gloomy.)

FREDALINE (*with decision*). I shall not.

ZINDA. Nay,

Nor I, indeed!

HILDA. Good sooth, but she has had
Her fancy's fling, and plucked the prize as well!

ERMYNTRUDE (*very softly*). Heigho!

HILDA. Where is the Prince?

MAUD. He sits apart

With head on hand, as though he tooth-ache
had,

And puffs, and pales, and starts at sound of voice.

ZINDA. In truth, he looks as one who's suffered
shock.

FREDALINE. And Isra sits afar beneath a tree,
And will not speak, and hath red eyes, and sighs!

MAUD. Oh, 'tis a happy day!

FREDALINE. Ay, *that* it is!

I've sledon known another such—thanks be!

PERLA. We should rejoice for Rosamund!

(MARTHA enters L. I E.)

MAUD. We do!

'Tis why we have this air of jollity,
Because we *are* so pleased. . . . Heigho!

ALL GIRLS. HEIGHO!!

MARTHA (*C. of log, below it, stops*). Why, what a
wintry blast of grief is here!

Fetch not the leaves from off the trees, I pray!
Are these my merry maidens? What hath chanced,
To change ye to such images of woe?

MAUD. Hast thou not heard our Prince is caught?

MARTHA. I have!

MAUD. Then ask not why we weep!

MARTHA. I' faith, 'tis odd!

For the Princess is as distraught as ye!
Perchance her fortune hath bemused her brain.
But as for ye, I am at guess to know
Why ye should mourn! Your game was elsewhere.

Ye *chattered* of the Prince, 'tis very true,
 And wove your toils around *another* knight,
 Our poor Sir Merlyn, who hath gone stark mad
 From such deep drinking of the cup ye poured !

(*Girls stare at her.*)

MAUD. Sir Merlyn !

HILDA.

Tush !

FREDALINE.

Go to !

MARTHA (*a step or two to c.*) Now, baggages,
 Have I not seen ye gathered round his feet,
 And hanging on his lips, the livelong day ?
 And the poor soul hath *purred* with tickled pride,
 His fat cheeks creased with smiles, and hath not seen
 Ye were at jest with a slow-witted fool !

(*Pause.*)

MAUD. But that . . . (*rises*) that *was* the
 Prince !

GIRLS.

Of course !

MARTHA.

What ? He !

The Prince, forsooth ! Ha ! ha !

(*Sees their dumbfounded faces.*)

How now ? What's here ?

HILDA (*slowly rising*). Dost thou then say that
 man is *not* the Prince ?
 That little . . . fat . . . round . . .

MARTHA. That's Sir Merlyn, maid !

GIRLS. WHAT !!

HILDA. Then the Prince is—Girls, we have been
 fools !

(*The rest of the girls rise.*)

FREDALINE. How *dared* the little fright deceive
 us so !

I'd have him whipped at cart's tail!

ZINDA. Worse than that! . . .

I'll tell my Cousin Hill——

PERLA (*coming L. of ZINDA, puts her right arm round ZINDA and her left hand over ZINDA'S mouth.*)

Nay, softly, friends!

Remember our sweet Rosamund is pledged

To wed this . . . humble gentleman!

GIRLS (*jumping with joy*). Aha! . . .

MAUD. Why, sooth, 'tis so!

MARTHA (*puzzled*). Nay, nay, she'll wed the Prince.

(*Girls laugh and surround her.*)

MAUD. The Prince, thou simple soul! We all
had deemed

Our little fat-cheeked gentle was the Prince!

(*MARTHA amazed, then tickled.*)

HILDA. We thought yon handsome youth was but
a Knight,

No game for us!

MARTHA. Where got ye this idea?

FREDALINE. Why, Isra had it first!

GIRLS. Yes, yes, 'twas she!

MAUD. Nay, come and tell her, then! 'Twill
cheer her grief!

PERLA. And let's go seek our dearest Rosamund!

(*Girls and MARTHA exit L. 2 E. MARTHA laughing and holding her sides.*) (*ROLFE enters R. 1 E., comes slowly to C., deep in thought.*)

ROLFE. The sun leans down towards the sea's far
rim.

Night's curtain loosens from its day-bound folds.

Life's finger crooks to turn another page,

Point to another chapter, where is writ

The plain word "Duty" . . . and a word scored
through
As soon as traced ! Why was it writ at all ? . . .

(*Looks around.*)

And so, farewell . . . dear silent friends of mine !
And thou (*laying hand on tree*), farewell, whose aged
arms have nursed
The dreams of boyhood, youth, and later years . . .
And who hast shadowed my short dream of love.
How short ! How frail ! Scarce had its leaves put
forth
Ere, sere and dry, they fell . . . as thine must do !
But thou wilt know another spring . . . I, none !

(*ROLFE sits L. of tree. MARTHA enters L. 2 E., coming
to L. of ROLFE, still laughing and wiping her
eyes.*)

MARTHA. Were ever maids so crazed ! Ha ! ha !
The Prince !

Oh, me ! The Prince, indeed ! The Prince ! Ho !
Ho !

ROLFE. Why, what hath seized thee, my good
soul ?

MARTHA (*weakly*). Oh, sir,
Oh, dear Sir Knight ! Ha ! ha ! The Prince, for-
sooth !

ROLFE. What ails thee ?

MARTHA. Sir, what think you ! They have took
Sir Mer—Sir Mer—Sir Merlyn for the Prince !

(*Voice going up in a squeak.*)

ROLFE. I know . . . I know . . . It was in
truth *my* jest.
To shield me from these—wife-providing maids.
But it hath turned a sword within my hand,
And hath plunged deep into a heart most dear !

MARTHA. The Princess Rosamund ?

ROLFE.

Ay! . . .

MARTHA.

Hath she took

The jest amiss? . . . I mind me it was I
Told her the Prince both loved her and would wed!
'Faith, if she took Sir Merlyn for thyself
Small wonder she was so distraught, poor maid!

ROLFE. Why . . . (*Rises.*) What is this?

MARTHA.

What, sir?

ROLFE.

Say on! Say on!

When saidst thou that?

MARTHA.

An hour or two ago.

ROLFE. What else? Come, tell me quickly,
quickly!

MARTHA.

Sir,

I said that thou had'st sworn to make her Queen.
She turned from me as from a poison snake
Crying, "He does not love me!" "Why?" said I,
"Because he'd make thee Queen? Can he not be
Thy lover still when thou art wed?" And she
Hiding her face, sank down as 'neath a blow!

ROLFE. Oh, Heav'n! Then came I hastily, and
she

Turned from me with white scorn! And I reproached
And taunted her! Oh, fool (*moves down R. C.*) to jest
with Fate!

What dreadful thing thought she I purposed her!
What insult, and what horrid perfidy! . . .

MARTHA (*looking L.*). Here comes the maid!

ROLFE (*comes to MARTHA, pushing her behind him
towards R.*). Withdraw thee swiftly! Go!

MARTHA (*going*). Nay, sir, I am no dolt! Need'st
bid me not!

Though, 'faith, I think thy wooing will be hard!
Perchance she'll not forgive thee! There . . . I go!

(*MARTHA exits R. 1 E., as ROSAMUND enters L. 2 E.*)

ROLFE is at R., (*hidden from ROSAMUND by tree.*)

ROSAMUND. One little day! One little grain of
Time

From Life's clutched handful of the eternal sand!
 Yet long enough to break a heart in! Ah,
 I do most clearly see I was at fault!
 I *know* that he is noble, upright, true,
 And with a larger view of duty's debt . . .
 He held me fit to strengthen our poor Prince,
 And yielded his own dream to serve his Land . . .
 Then I'll be noble, too! My Country's good
 Hold first, and justify his sacrifice! . . .
 Though I must love him . . . love him till I die . . .

ROLFE *draws near, L. of her. She puts her arms
 round tree.*)

Wilt tell him this, dear tree, in all the years
 That stretch away to carry us apart,
 There'll be one secret door that none shall ope. . . .
 It leads to my heart's heart. I lay the key
 Here, in thy gracious shade. Keep fast its grave!
 Farewell, dear tree! (*Kisses tree.*) Farewell, oh,
 dearer love!

(ROSAMUND *sinks on bank L. of tree. ROLFE comes
 slowly to R. of her.*)

ROLFE. I have no words to tell tell of my shame!
 ROSAMUND (*after a startled pause, leaning weakly
 against tree*). Thy shame, sir?

ROLFE. For the hurt I've put on thee,
 Most dear and worshipped maiden!

ROSAMUND. Nay . . . what hurt?

ROLFE. My very love hath hurt thee.

ROSAMUND. 'Tis a pain
 I'd not have missed, indeed.

ROLFE. I thank thee, sweet!
 But now thou may'st forget thy suffering,
 For all is clear, and shines the sun again!
 Wed by the grace of Heav'n, I came to bid
 Farewell to love and thee . . . and here I find

Both love *and* thee . . . my own ! For I have
caught
Some part of thy dear speech ! Thou lov'st me still,

(ROLFE *kneels to* ROSAMUND.)

My Rosamund ! My soul's best ! My life's crown !

(*Catches her hand and kisses it. She turns her head
from him.*)

Why lookest thou from me with such sad eyes ?

ROSAMUND. Sir, I have pondered much in these
last hours. . . .

I have much sorrowed for my doubt of thee . . .

I am much shamed at my unruly words . . .

For I, who looked to feel the Touch-stone's stroke
Upon my soul, shrank back at the first blow.

But thou hast made my duty plain to me,

And I would prove true metal, so (*rises*) farewell !

ROLFE (*puzzled, rising*). Nay, why farewell ! I
sail with thee at eve !

ROSAMUND (*startled*). Ah no ! Thou dost not
come to Saramede !

Ah, no !

ROLFE.

Why, Rosamund ?

ROSAMUND.

If I must do

The thing I've vowed, then come not thou anear !

ROLFE. What must thou do ?

ROSAMUND. Thou know'st that I must wed . . .

ROLFE. Thou dost not mean . . . no, no, 'twas
idly said !

Thou *canst* not mean to hold thee to *that* vow !

ROSAMUND. What art thou saying ?

ROLFE.

I am all astray !

ROSAMUND. Did I not pledge my word at thy
behest ?

ROLFE. At *my* behest ?

ROSAMUND. What else ?

ROLFE. What folly's here ?

I do command thee to love none but me !

ROSAMUND. I am not sworn to love him, but . . .
to wed.

ROLFE. Art sworn at *my* behest ?

ROSAMUND. Thou know'st it well !

If I am strong, my duty is full clear. . . .

Sustain the frail, be right-arm to the weak . . .

Lend him what courage I am mistress of,

That he may strive to face the world . . . a man !

If thou hast eyes to see the need of it,

Then I have will to face the pain of it . . .

So *thou* come not. . . .

ROLFE. What tangled maze is here ?

Sworn at my will, and pledged at my behest ?

This is the maddest coil e'er daunted wits !

'Tis *I* who need thee . . . I and Saramede !

ROSAMUND. I understand thee not . . . my vow,
once giv'n,

Abides as doth thine own. The two are one

Since both serve but one end !

ROLFE. *My* vow, belov'd ?

ROSAMUND. Hast thou not vowed to make me
Queen ?

ROLFE. Ay, sooth !

ROSAMUND. Then hear *my* vow ! I swear hence-
forth to live

For my dear Land, and for my Country's weal !

I vow to wed none other than her Prince,

Since wedding him I best may serve her so !

I vow to be her Queen——

ROLFE. I hold thee there !

Thou *shalt* be Queen, and love me with thy soul !

Dearest, thou art astray ! Nay, trust me, then !

I thought that thou had'st learnt the truth of me . . .

But wait . . . and trust me ! I'll go search for him

Thou thinkest thou art pledged to ! Keep thy vow !

Thou shalt be Queen indeed !

(*Kisses her hand and exits R. I E. ROSAMUND bewildered goes to tree and sinks on bank R. of it and hides her face in her hands. SIR MERLYN enters L. U. E., gloomy and plunged in thought. He is followed by ISRA, who, unseen by him, stalks him with a determined, if melancholy, air. ROSAMUND is invisible to them. SIR MERLYN comes down C., sits R. of log. ISRA comes down L. sits L. of log.*)

ISRA. 'Tis strangely difficult to be alone!

SIR MERLYN (*rising, with a groan*). Thy pardon lady. . . .

ISRA (*quickly*). Stay! Where dost thou go?
Would leave me to be mauled by hungry beasts,
Or hugged to death by bears?

SIR MERLYN (*sitting near her*). Thrice happy bears!

ISRA (*gives him a glance. He edges towards her.*)

ISRA. Would be a bear, to slay me even so?

SIR MERLYN. Nay, but would hold thee in mine arms till Death!

(*Putting his arm round her.*)

ISRA (*having got what she wanted, becomes promptly virtuous*). I thank thee . . . brother!

(*He withdraws her arm with a gloomy start.*)

There! I'll stay thee not!

I would not keep thee from thy raptured tryst,
For who am I? Go? Leave me here to die!

SIR MERLYN. I ask but leave to die with thee!

(*ROSAMUND, roused, begins unconsciously to listen.*)

ISRA. Oh, sir
'Tis brotherly indeed to say me so!
I'm very sure my sister would be joyed.

(He mutters something.)

What dost thou say? Some tender word of her?

(ROSAMUND rises and watches them, amazed.)

Ah! What was that? Dost think it was a bear?

SIR MERLYN. I will protect thee, maiden!

ISRA *(promptly)*. Hold my hand!

(He does so.)

'Tis naught! There, I'll not trouble thee!

SIR MERLYN *(detaining her hand)*. Nay! nay!

(Pause. They sit hand in hand. Then he slips his arm absent-mindedly round her waist.)

ISRA *(with a sigh)*. I wonder . . . brother . . .
had'st thou not been Prince

If . . . if . . .

SIR MERLYN. If ? . . . Tell me then!

ISRA. Ah, me! I would
That thou wert but a simple gentleman!

SIR MERLYN. I am.

ISRA. Yea, thou art simple, it is true.
'Tis why I love thee.

SIR MERLYN *(rapturously)*. Ah!

ISRA. Nay, nay, be deaf!

I did not say it, sir! For thou art pledged!
Though if thou love my sister, and she thee,
Ye have the strangest way of showing it!

SIR MERLYN. I do not love *thy* sister.

ISRA. She hath said
That thou hast told her so.

SIR MERLYN. It is not true !
I did but toy with her. And she mistook
My idle play. 'Tis an old fault of mine !
I do forget my strange and fatal pow'r.
Poor soul ! I fear she loves me very much.

ROSAMUND (*crossing L.*). Doth she indeed ! Loves
thee, thou flimsy fool ?

Nay, but 'tis thou who art so all mistook !
Child, I would gladly yield thy . . . popinjay,
But that I've took an oath and sworn a vow
To wed no other than my Country's Prince,

(SIR MERLYN *starts.*)

For I was told he loved me and would wed.
And thinking thus to save our threatened Land
From staggering to ruin 'neath a fool,
I offered her myself as sacrifice. . . .

(SIR MERLYN both hurt and relieved. ISRA jumping up, crosses MERLYN to L. C.)

ISRA. Thou meanest, then, that were he not the
Prince
Thou would'st not wed with him?

ROSAMUND. Not even though
I loved him, and mistook his idle play!

(SIR MERLYN *curls up*.)

But as for thee, why, child, we are at odds !
Did'st thou not say thy fancy had been ta'en
By him . . . the hunter-knight ?

ISRA. The may-pole? Nay!

ROSAMUND. I 'spake to thee of him!

ISRA. Of *him*?

ROSAMUND. Who else?

ISRA. Thou lovest *him*?

ROSAMUND. Hush, child. . . I have forgot. . .

SIR MERLYN (*rises, stammering with excitement*).

M—M—Madam!

ROSAMUND (*coldly*). Sir Prince?

SIR MERLYN. I give thee back thy vow!

ROSAMUND. Thou canst not, sir! 'Twas sworn
in face of Heav'n.

SIR MERLYN. Madam, thy vow was ta'en to wed
the Prince!

ROSAMUND (*wearily*). Ay, sir.

SIR MERLYN (*triumphantly*). Then . . . then thou
canst not wed with me!

ROSAMUND. What trick is this?

SIR MERLYN. Madam, no trick, indeed!

ROSAMUND. Would'st abdicate? Would'st slink
from duty's path?

Ah, coward!

SIR MERLYN. Madam . . . I am not the Prince,
That's all!

ROSAMUND. Thou'rt not the Prince! . . .

ISRA. Thou'rt not the Prince!

SIR MERLYN. It was a play, a jest to trick ye
maids.

He swore me to't, on hearing ye were come.

I know not why, unless perchance he thought

To learn, by watching of my ways with ye,

How Princes use . . . Methinks I have not done

The part so *very* ill! What think ye?

(ROSAMUND *turns with a little sound of mixed surprise
and joy, and hides her face against tree.*)

ISRA.

Oh! . . .

Then thou *art* but a simple gentleman!

A very, very simple gentleman!

Oh, I am joy'd! Would whisper in thine ear!

(*D. es so.*)

(ROLFE *enters* R. I E.)

I'd not be Queen for worlds, or see thee King!

(Sees ROLFE.) It is the Prince! (Curtseys.) My humble homage, sir!

ROLFE. Hast told, old Merlyn?

SIR MERLYN. Ay, Sir Prince!

ROLFE (*gravely, his eye on ROSAMUND*). Withdraw!

(MERLYN and ISRA exit L. I E., laughing. ROLF turns to ROSAMUND.)

My only love, I'm here to claim thy vow.
My foolish whim hath caused thee saddest pain,
Can'st thou forgive the jester and the jest?
Thy love and thy Prince appeal to thee . . .
At thy heart's door we knock! What answer,
sweet?

ROSAMUND (*turning shyly to him*). Heart's eyes are open, and heart's ears, my lord!

ROLFE (*taking her into his arms*). Heart's heart, then take thy summons of . . . a kiss!

(*They wander off together, or old bus., chorus, etc. Led by SIR MERLAN and ISRA, procession round tree. MARTYA appears C., calls "The boat! The boat!" all go off singing, ROLFE and ROSAMUND last.*)

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